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General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 20 September 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: Please accept my congratulations, Sir, on your election to the presidency, and my assurances that Kiribati will support you during your term of office. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Jean Ping, for his able and effective leadership during the fifty-ninth session.

During last week's High-level Plenary Meeting, we discussed, among other issues, the future of this Organization and what we expect from it. We heard about the achievements made by our Organization over the past 60 years. We express our gratitude to all nations for the cooperation and support that led to those achievements. I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General as well as his staff, for his leadership of our Organization at these difficult and trying times.

We also heard about the shortcomings of our Organization. While we recognize and fully endorse the need for reform in the Organization, we are concerned that many of the shortcomings in terms of the promotion of sustainable development in Member nations, in particular in the small island developing States, are the result of our inability to deliver on commitments made in the past.

Individual Member nations have the prime responsibility for achieving sustainable development within their borders, but with globalization and the increasing interdependency of our world, individual nations cannot achieve sustainable development acting alone. To attain sustainable development in small island developing States, the need for external cooperation and support is understandably more pronounced.

Having taken stock of progress over the past 60 years, the challenge now is to consider measures by which we can collectively and through the United Nations address the needs and concerns highlighted during the High-level Plenary Meeting. Of particular concern are the special needs of the least developed countries and small island developing States.

While Kiribati may be categorized as a least developed country and a small island developing State, the people of Kiribati have a genuine desire to develop themselves and at the same time to develop their country. As their elected representatives, we have a clear mandate and duty to make our best efforts to meet their development aspirations.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Population issues are a major challenge in our development efforts. Concerted efforts to promote effective family planning have been given greater focus in our national development strategies. The growing number of unemployed youth brings with it new social issues. We are committed to directing the energy of our youth to productive and worthwhile pursuits. Employment opportunities abroad for both men and women, such as the arrangements in place with foreign shipping companies, fishing companies and cruise operators, will be expanded and new opportunities explored. The New Zealand Government's Pacific Access Category scheme is a very welcome model that merits closer scrutiny by other countries.

The spiralling cost of fuel is an issue of grave concern to us. The impact of rising fuel costs has been hardest on the least developed countries, which are also the least able to afford it. Therefore, the need to accelerate the development of alternative sources of energy, including clean and renewable energy, is now greater than it ever was.

We firmly believe that our fishery resources can provide us with the basis for achieving a sustainable future, but in order to be able to do so, we shall need the assistance of our development partners in providing the necessary incentives through the provision of credit schemes to those investors who are able and willing to develop onshore facilities within resource-owning countries.

But before we can achieve that, and if we are to achieve our Millennium Development Goals, we shall continue to be reliant on the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income being met.

Environmental issues and, in particular, climate change and sea-level rise are security issues for countries comprising low-lying coral atolls, such as Kiribati. A global and concerted effort, including stronger political commitment, is required to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We are appreciative of the support we have received and continue to receive in developing adaptation measures to climate change and sea-level rise. We nevertheless acknowledge the need now to seriously consider the option of having to relocate our peoples when necessary — an option that can be meaningfully addressed only within this forum.

Kiribati fully endorses the need for comprehensive reform in the United Nations. The environment in which the Organization now operates is so very different from that of 1945. Reform must take place to ensure that the Organization continues to be a relevant institution for its Member countries.

Terrorism threatens all. Kiribati condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and we support the global fight against terrorism. We have noted with increasing alarm the globalization of terror. We cannot afford to be complacent about terrorism and will contribute, within our resource constraints, to the war against terror. We seek support from those able and willing in the implementation and enforcement of counter-terrorism legislation we have passed in compliance with our obligations as a member of the global community.

Kiribati has contributed to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands. We will continue to contribute to that regional effort as long as there is need. Kiribati is also interested in contributing civilian police to peacekeeping missions of the United Nations.

Kiribati supports an expansion of the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council. In our view, those countries, such as Japan, that are significant contributors to United Nations programmes promoting peace, security and development merit a permanent seat on the Security Council.

As we consider reform of the United Nations and as we celebrate 60 years of the United Nations, we believe that now is also the time to consider the issue of Taiwan and its 23 million people. Taiwan is a country where democracy thrives, where the rule of law prevails and where human rights are respected. Taiwan has also remained able and willing to make significant contributions to the collaborative efforts to secure global peace, security and prosperity.

We also believe that, whatever the views are on the question of whether Taiwan is a domestic issue or not, there can be no justification for supporting threatening initiatives, such as the so called anti-secession law, which could have such far-reaching effects on regional and global stability.

I am confident that, under your leadership, Sir, we will work with unity of purpose and perhaps with less posturing to address the challenges before us.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Carlos Gomes, Jr., Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Carlos Gomes, Jr., Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Carlos Gomes, Jr., Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gomes (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from the French text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. Given your role at this critical moment, Guinea-Bissau, in its capacity as a Vice-President at this session, will spare no effort in supporting you in your work.

I also extend my warmest congratulations to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the sisterly Republic of Gabon, on the commitment and skill he demonstrated during his presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

I also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his excellent work at the head of our Organization to strengthen its credibility, promote essential international solidarity, and achieve consensus on major issues relating to security, counter-terrorism, development and human rights.

The world awaits the dawn of a new order, which will require a more realistic and democratic international political framework, global commitment, and the collective will of all Member States to meet the challenges facing humankind in the context of increasing interdependence. We endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, and I reiterate my country's readiness to contribute to all global agreements that will allow us to meet the current challenges of development, security, the fight against international terrorism, respect for human rights, and institutional reform of the United Nations, in particular that of the Security Council, where Africa should enjoy the legitimate right to hold two permanent seats.

To carry out these reforms, it is important that there be political will, based on the collective action of States, which is the foundation of this international system. I cannot overemphasize the fact that cooperation which could lead to this collective action will be possible only if the policies of our countries take account of the needs of our own citizens, as well as the needs of others, because we are part of the same human family, forced to live together on this same planet, and we have an obligation to share it and protect it.

In this regard, I would express my concern vis-à-vis the phenomenon of globalization. We are aware of the enormous potential and advantages of a well-managed globalization and all that it has to offer in the economic, financial, commercial, technological and communication fields. However, it is equally important, at this stage of globalization, to recognize that it has not been sufficiently inclusive. Exclusion and marginalization in international relations are the negative effects of globalization. These are factors that contribute to the existence and proliferation of conflicts — situations which require properly-coordinated, global responses, as well as multilateral frameworks for dialogue, agreement and effective interaction.

Inter-State conflict, civil wars, organized crime, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons are phenomena which threaten international security. But such threats are not limited solely to these spheres. They also involve poverty, pandemics and natural disasters affecting the planet.

The growing link between security and development is proof that the gesture of solidarity desired with regard to financing for development of the poor is needed more than ever. This responsible and

positive attitude is one of the main pillars in our efforts to pursue the Millennium Development Goals, a challenge which mankind cannot fail to meet. I hope that there will be sufficient political will so that the new partnership for development which we wish to see established among States in the very near future will dispel any doubts and fulfil the hopes raised during the internationally-organized conferences within the framework of the United Nations in the economic, financial and social and related spheres.

The outcome document we have just adopted at the conclusion of the recent High-level Plenary Meeting is still insufficient, but it is forward-looking. We must underscore the fact that discussions, agreements and negotiations need to be pursued in a transparent fashion in order to achieve desired results by all Member States.

Africa has rightfully been the recent subject of increased attention on the part of the international community. I am pleased to express our satisfaction at the decision recently adopted at the Summit of the G-8 regarding debt cancellation for some African countries, and the possibility of extending this measure to other poor countries, including my country, Guinea-Bissau.

On 1 October, Guinea-Bissau will continue and conclude the process of complete return to constitutional normalcy through presidential elections. The success of this political transitional period that began in September 2003 is the fruitful result of balanced relations among institutions of the Republic, based on the separation of powers and characterized by good governance.

We must recognize that this has not always been easy, and quite often we have faced situations which go beyond our national capacity to resolve. The framework for constant cooperation and agreement with the international community has been an important instrument in following up the socio-economic situation and the political internal process. We wish to express our thanks to the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union, the international community and Portuguese-speaking countries for contributing to the political transitional process in our country. Without this support for Guinea-Bissau it would have been difficult for us to face the numerous constraints during the transitional phase.

The role played by the United Nations system — the Economic and Social Council's ad hoc group and the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau in particular — deserves special mention and our most heartfelt thanks.

The support of the international community has been very important in the success of the transitional period in Guinea-Bissau. However, more decisive action is required to meet the challenges of reconstruction and the rebuilding of the infrastructure in my country, to improve the economy and create minimal conditions for governability and to strengthen the foundation of a democratic State, which we wish to see in Guinea-Bissau. These factors are essential for peace and for political and social stability.

Once again, I would call from this rostrum for the support of the international community in the November Donor Round-Table Conference with partners in peace for development in order to adopt together a document on the national strategy to reduce poverty. This goal is in line with the concerns of the United Nations aimed at more effective assistance to countries in post-conflict situations, contained in the proposal to create a Peacebuilding Commission, which we fully support.

We recognize respect for the rules of democracy, for human rights and good economic and financial governance. We feel that they are the foundation for the rule of law. We reaffirm the commitment of my Government, in strict compliance with our constitution, to work in close cooperation with all institutions of the Republic to create conditions aimed at promoting national reconciliation, peace and domestic political stability, to consolidate our relations of friendship, brotherhood and solidarity with our neighbours and to restore a climate of trust, credibility and effective, lasting partnership with the entire international community for socio-economic development in our country.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Gomes, Jr., Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Lengsavad (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in Laotian; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset I would like to congratulate you upon your unanimous election as President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that with your experience and diplomatic skills you will guide our deliberations to a successful outcome. I would also like to convey our great appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, President of the fifty-ninth session of the Assembly, for the efficient manner in which he presided over our work as well as for the fine accomplishments recorded during the session.

Sixty years after its creation, the United Nations, our only multilateral Organization, is at a crossroads. When the Organization was established, the promotion of peace and security, as well as that of economic and social development, were its main objectives. It was then conceived to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and insecurity, to reduce and eradicate poverty and to move towards economic prosperity for all.

Today, the world is still filled with conflicts, violence, insecurity, hunger, poverty and despair. We have therefore every reason to act collectively to reform and strengthen this multilateral institution to enable it to effectively address the many complex challenges the world is now facing.

In this reform process, revitalizing the General Assembly has now become one of the crucial issues for consideration by Member States. In our opinion, the Assembly, which comprises all the Members of the United Nations, should continue to play a central role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ. It should serve as a forum for high-level policy statements, as well as for the consideration, of, inter alia, agenda items of special political importance or urgency. In order to strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly, Member States should stress the need to fully respect and restore the balance between the principal organs of the United Nations, within their respective purviews and mandates, in accordance with the Charter.

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, the leaders of the States Members of the United Nations resolved to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. In this regard, we regret that the seventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), held in New York from 2 to 27 May 2005, was unable to reach consensus on the substantive questions relating to the three pillars of the Treaty. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is of the view that all States parties should remain committed to the NPT and believes that it should continue to have cornerstone status in the context of global disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The world economy continues to be characterized by slow and uneven growth and instability. Globalization may offer a great many opportunities to a number of countries. However, it also presents numerous challenges and risks for the developing world, particularly the most vulnerable groups, namely, the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries. In reality, the process of globalization among and within countries has not produced equal benefits. The gap between the developed and developing world is widening, and we are all greatly concerned about increased poverty in many developing countries.

In order for developing countries to reap the benefits of globalization, an enabling external economic environment for development is required. To that end, we should all strive to achieve greater coherence among the international trading, monetary and financial systems.

Among the most vulnerable groups, the landlocked developing countries deserve special attention. The Almaty Programme of Action, which was adopted in 2003, was a landmark document that set out five priority areas. The São Paulo Consensus, which was adopted in 2004 by the eleventh United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, recognized, among other things, that the landlocked developing countries were small and vulnerable economies. Those documents, together with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, constitute a significant achievement on which the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries is building in order to move forward in promoting its legitimate cause. In my capacity as Chairman of that Group, I appeal to the international community for sympathy and support for our endeavours.

In order to strengthen unity and solidarity among the countries of the South, and as a follow-up to the

implementation of the Havana Programme of Action, adopted by the first South Summit in 2000, the second South Summit of the Group of 77 and China was held in Doha, Qatar, from 12 to 16 June 2005. The Doha Declaration and Plan of Action, which were adopted at the second South Summit, called for a more energetic effort to deepen and revitalize South-South cooperation, with a view to enhancing sustained economic growth and the sustainable development of the countries of the South.

Last April in Jakarta, Indonesia, the Asian-African Summit was held with the objective of reinvigorating the spirit of the 1955 Bandung Conference and of charting future cooperation between the two continents towards a new Asian-African strategic partnership. That partnership, which was inaugurated at the Summit, constitutes an important building block for the further strengthening of South-South cooperation.

I would like commend Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for his tireless efforts to ensure the success of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly. The Lao People's Democratic Republic highly values the outcome document adopted by our heads of State or Government, in which they reaffirmed the Millennium Declaration and their commitment to implementing effectively and fully the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries.

Given the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of Member States, the second South Summit, held in Doha, called upon the Government of the United States to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which, in addition to being unilateral and contrary to the Charter, international law and the principle of good neighbourliness, is the cause of enormous material loss and economic damage to the people of Cuba.

On the Korean Peninsula, we welcome the recent resumption of the six-party talks, which have yielded important progress. The Lao People's Democratic Republic expresses the hope that the concerned parties will further deploy joint efforts and undertake concrete actions based on the principles and commitments contained in the Joint Declaration of 19 September 2005 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free Korean Peninsula, thus contributing to the promotion of peace, security, stability and development cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

In the Middle East, although the situation remains difficult and complex, a degree of progress has been made that ought to be further promoted. In order to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, the question of Palestine in all its aspects should be resolved in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. In this regard, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its unwavering support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to exercise their right to self-determination, including their right to establish an independent State of Palestine living side by side with Israel.

The situation in Iraq continues to be a matter of concern to the international community. It is our sincere hope that durable peace, security and stability can soon be secured in that country, paving the way for the Iraqi people to be truly the masters of their own future and destiny.

The year 2005 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a historic event of great significance in the political life of the nation. In general, the national economy is continuing to grow at a sustained pace. The rate of growth reached 7.2 per cent in the period 2004-2005. Foreign investment is on the increase, political stability, social tranquillity and security are assured and the living conditions of the people are continuing to improve. The multi-ethnic Lao people, while enjoying fundamental rights, including the right to believe or not to believe in any religion, stand firmly united in nation-building. Furthermore, the Lao People's Democratic Republic remains committed to implementing a policy aimed at establishing a State based on the rule of law so as to ensure freedom, democracy and the legitimate interests of its citizens, as well as of foreign residents and other foreigners living and working in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Externally, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has vigorously participated in multifaceted regional and international activities aimed at fostering peace, stability, friendship and the promotion of development cooperation. One of the greatest events for the Lao

People's Democratic Republic was the historic hosting of the tenth Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in November 2004, which was followed by the successful holding, from 24 to 29 July 2005, of the thirty-eighth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, the post-ministerial conferences and the twelfth ASEAN Regional Forum. Those events reflect the great sense of responsibility of the multi-ethnic Lao people as a whole in the discharge of the country's chairmanship of ASEAN during the past 12 months.

Furthermore, those accomplishments have significantly contributed to narrowing the development gaps within ASEAN member countries and fostering the realization of an ASEAN community. That community has three pillars: the ASEAN Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, all of which are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing for the purpose of ensuring durable peace, stability and shared prosperity in the region.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel), Vice-President, took the Chair.

ASEAN hopes that friendly countries and the United Nations will become more involved in the implementation of the Vientiane Action Programme and the ASEAN Development Fund for regional economic integration, particularly in the areas of human resource development, infrastructure, information technology and energy development.

Peace cannot be achieved without development, and development in turn cannot be realized without cooperation among nations, with the United Nations playing an important catalytic role.

The United Nations — the sole multilateral, universal Organization — cannot be strengthened, however, if it does not embrace, in equal measure, the concerns of all, including the small, vulnerable, and weak States, which make up the majority of its Members. In that respect, we should all remind ourselves that not only will our words and the principles we espouse be judged by future generations, but so, too, will the actions that we undertake to bring about development for the whole of humanity.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Silvan Shalom, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel.

Mr. Shalom (Israel): It is my unique pleasure to praise His Excellency Ambassador Dan Gillerman, my emissary to the United Nations, who is in the Chair at present, upon his election to the post of Vice-President at this session of the General Assembly, and to wish him much success.

These are optimistic times in the Middle East. The iron wall that has defined Israel's relations with most of the Arab and Muslim world for generations, is coming down. Israel's contacts with Arab and Muslim States are growing at a rate never seen before. Countries like Pakistan and others that in the past refused to acknowledge our shared humanity, today extend their hands in friendship and recognition. Relations with key Muslim States, such as Turkey, are flourishing, while our peaceful ties with both Egypt and Jordan are constantly improving.

Here in New York this week, I have had the honour of meeting with more than 10 of my colleagues from the Arab and Muslim world — a number unthinkable just two years ago. Those meetings have been friendly, as is only fitting for countries that are not in conflict — either territorially, or economically. Israel welcomes this new readiness for contact, and we encourage our neighbours to build on the foundations that we are now laying. Contacts between Israel and its Arab and Muslim neighbours are good for the region, and good for peace.

We all share a common interest in building a region of tolerance and cooperation — a region where the moderates have the initiative, not the extremists, whose violence has set the agenda for so long. Indeed, those who genuinely wish to help the Palestinians and to bring them the benefits of peace and prosperity must realize that building contacts and cooperation with Israel is a crucial element in that process.

Possibilities for cooperation abound. In fields as diverse as agriculture, health, the environment, transportation and electricity, the potential benefits of Middle East regional cooperation are immense. Such cooperation can bring tangible and immediate economic benefits, as Israel's improving relations with Jordan and Egypt have shown.

Unfortunately, many of our ties with the Arab and Muslim world are still deep in the shadows, hidden from the public eye. Today, I call on my Arab and Muslim colleagues to bring our contacts out into the light of day, so that our peoples may understand our

shared desire to work with each other to bring peace and prosperity to our region. I call on the leaders of the Arab and Muslim world, to join us in speaking to our populations of peace rather than conflict, of reasons to cooperate, rather than reasons to boycott.

In November of this year, I will sit alongside my Arab and Muslim colleagues at two international gatherings: the World Summit on the Information Society, in Tunisia; and the summit of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, in Barcelona. I call upon the international community and my Arab and Muslim counterparts to work together with us to ensure that those meetings result in concrete projects that will help reinforce our peace efforts on the ground.

This is also the time for the international community to renew its investment in the future of the Middle East by reviving the multilateral track of the Middle East peace talks.

Just one week ago, Israel completed the evacuation of all Israeli communities in the Gaza Strip. Entire families — many of whom had lived and tilled those lands for three generations — were called upon by their Government to leave and to begin their lives anew. Today, there are no more Israelis in Gaza. Israeli military rule is now over. Responsibility for the affairs of Gaza and its residents is now in Palestinian hands. Israel's actions have opened the door to a new future, and we invite our neighbours to walk with us together through that door.

We are committed to the road map, and we wish to get back to its full implementation. To do that, we need a partner. A partner who is committed, as we are, to the peaceful resolution of our differences, and to the democratic and universal principles on which peace is founded.

Israel attaches great importance to the Palestinian assumption of responsibility. In it lies the key to progress towards peace. The transfer of responsibility for Gaza provides the Palestinian side with the chance to take their fate into their own hands; an opportunity not just to say that they want to govern, but to show that they are ready and able to do so. Gaza, we hope, will serve as a model for how the Palestinian Authority can build a functioning, democratic and peaceful society.

Recognizing the significance of this moment, Israel is taking great pains to ensure that Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas is given every opportunity to establish his authority. We want to promote conditions that will benefit ordinary Palestinians, without posing a security threat to Israel.

Israel has expressed its strong support for international aid and assistance for the social and economic development of Gaza, and we are committed to facilitating those efforts. Constructive international engagement is crucial to the Palestinian Authority's success. The international community's priority now must be ensuring that the Palestinian Authority and its institutions can deliver the services and outcomes their people and ours expect and deserve.

Economic reconstruction, of course, is not enough. The Palestinian Authority must also deliver on its commitment to end the campaign of terror against Israel. For Israel, security is an issue on which we will never compromise. We insist on the end of terror and the dismantlement of its infrastructure, for the safety of our citizens, and so that our peace efforts can succeed.

Turning Gaza into a model of success requires that the Palestinian Authority act to promote and protect democracy from its enemies. Here, as with security, there is no room for discounts. Simply holding elections is no guarantee of moderation and responsible government.

Two days ago in Gaza, the terrorist organization Hamas held a rally of 10,000 armed men dedicated to a holy war against Israel. Like Al-Qaida and the other organizations in the global network of terror, Hamas seeks to destroy everything that the international community and the moderates in our region seek to build: tolerance, democracy and peace. Hamas is responsible for the deliberate murder of hundreds of Israeli civilians, amongst them scores of women and children. Israel cannot and will not grant legitimacy to such an organization. We will not cooperate with its desire to participate in the forthcoming Palestinian elections. And we call on the international community to make clear its own opposition to the inclusion of such terrorists in the democratic process. If Gaza is indeed to be the positive model we all wish to see, then it is those who promote dialogue, not violence, who must be empowered.

The central threat to global security and to renewed momentum towards dialogue and peace in the Middle East today is Iran and its nuclear ambitions. As the speech before this Assembly by the newly elected president of Iran so clearly demonstrated, Iran's fanatic

regime remains determined to proceed with its nuclear weapons programme. Israel welcomes the efforts of the international community — in particular France, Britain and Germany, backed by the United States — to deny Iran the ability to terrorize the world with nuclear weapons.

The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency is meeting at this very moment in Vienna to discuss this urgent matter. I call on them to stop this evil regime from acquiring nuclear weapons. The security and stability of the entire globe is at stake. This is why it is essential and urgent that the Security Council take action. The international community must rally as one and use all the means at its disposal to stop Iran before it goes nuclear. We must not allow the fate of mankind to rest in the hands of the tyrants of Tehran.

In January of this year, this Assembly convened in special session to commemorate the Holocaust and pay tribute to the brave soldiers and nations who freed European Jewry and the world from the calamity of that darkest nightmare. Israel commends the community of nations for standing up in unison on this anniversary in commitment to the cry "never again". We commend the Secretary-General's and this Assembly's recognition that Holocaust remembrance must be a universal commitment. Ultimately, it is only the determined defence of the universal values of tolerance and the sanctity of each human life that will protect us from tyranny and extremism.

In this spirit, Israel calls on the General Assembly to adopt a resolution initiated by Israel and other like-minded countries commemorating the Holocaust and calling for global educational efforts to ensure that its lessons are learnt. Especially today, the day the world's greatest Nazi-hunter, Simon Wiesenthal, has passed away, we are reminded that the Holocaust is passing from human memory to history. As the generation of survivors leaves us, who will tell their story, if not us?

The special session to commemorate the Holocaust is only one example, of the welcome shift in the attitude of this institution towards Israel. Our recent election as Vice-President of this Assembly is another. I wish to commend the Secretary-General for his unique contribution to this positive trend. Israel's relations with the United Nations are better today than they have ever been. Nevertheless, they are still far from what they should be.

I call on all the States gathered here to examine how they too can contribute to promoting a more balanced and constructive United Nations approach to Israel. The United Nations cannot be true to its own lofty and universal principles, if it continues to waste scarce resources and serve as a forum of hostility and prejudice against one of its own.

The United Nations was born of the noble vision to bring the ideals of peace, security and human rights to all peoples. Sadly, reality of the United Nations remains far removed from the United Nations ideal. Major reform is urgent and crucial. Israel joins our fellow Member States and their peoples in the desire to see the United Nations fulfil the vision of its founders; to see the United Nations serving as a force for good in meeting the many challenges of our age.

Israel seeks to take its rightful place as a country with full and equal rights in this institution. We seek to realize our full potential to contribute to the global agenda. This is why I have decided to present for the first time Israel's candidacy for membership on the Security Council.

It was the wisest leader of ancient Israel, King Solomon, who wrote, in the book of Ecclesiastes, "For everything there is a season: a time to weep and a time to laugh; ... a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace." This is a time for peace. A time for the leaders of the world to work together to bring the blessings of opportunity, peace and prosperity to all humanity.

As the Jewish New Year dawns upon us, I extend on behalf of the Jewish people greetings of peace and brotherhood to our Muslim and Arab neighbours and to all nations.

The President returned to the Chair.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): A few days ago, this Hall was the venue of an unprecedented landmark, a historic gathering of a large number of heads of State or Government who converged to review and assess implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, to renew their commitment to the United Nations and the principles of its Charter and to underline their faith

and conviction in the valuable contribution of the international Organization which, by promoting the principles of peace, security and prosperity, is building a better world — a world free of the problems and challenges currently afflicting the international community and forming a threat to world peace and security. Those problems and challenges include terrorism, poverty, hunger, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the spread of contagious diseases, environmental degradation and the persistent and flagrant violation of human rights. The international gathering was an acknowledgement that multilateralism is the only viable option for addressing those issues and challenges, whose implications and dangers transcend geographical borders. Therefore, because of their nature, no country can confront them alone.

Although Kuwait welcomes the adoption of the outcome document (resolution 60/1) of the High-level Plenary Meeting, we express our disappointment that it did not include the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope that the international community will reach a consensus regarding the importance of full and non-selective implementation of all disarmament treaties, particularly the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, whose three main pillars are nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The international community must redouble its efforts to totally eliminate all weapons of mass destruction. We hope that the commitments and obligations agreed upon will be duly implemented.

Kuwait, for its part, will fulfil its obligations and comply with all relevant international conventions, treaties and United Nations resolutions. We hope that the next few years will see significant strides in the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and that our joint efforts will result in the streamlining of international cooperation and coordination mechanisms.

In that context, Kuwait wishes to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts and initiatives to reform the Secretariat with a view to enhancing its accountability and transparency and improving the performance of United Nations staff in order to meet the demands of the constantly changing international environment. Kuwait is actively participating in the ongoing consultations on the reform of United Nations organs such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

We hope that a consensus will eventually be reached on Security Council reform that will achieve our common goal: improving the Council's role and effectiveness, so that it can fulfil its Charter mandate, which is the maintenance of international peace and security. Council reform should also ensure broader representation of regional groups, including in particular Arab and Islamic representation, which would make Council resolutions more transparent and effective.

The phenomenon of terrorism has become a direct and immediate threat to international peace and security. Its dangers have spread to affect many countries throughout the world. The 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States of America, the events currently unfolding in Iraq and the recent bombings in London and Sharm el-Sheikh have provided indisputable proof that terrorism neither is associated with, nor specifically targets, a particular race, religion or culture. Therefore, the responsibility for combating terrorism is collective and must be shouldered by all Member States without exception.

While the State of Kuwait reaffirms its principled position rejecting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, we wish to emphasize the need to combat terrorism within a framework of international legitimacy that recognizes the legitimate rights of peoples and brings about justice and stability. We also stress the importance of commitment and adherence by Member States to the 12 international conventions on terrorism, as well as to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which Kuwait signed last Friday. We believe that that is the ideal way to eliminate this phenomenon, to curb its effects and to tackle its root causes.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait reaffirms its support for the proposal put forward by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to establish an international centre to fight terrorism. We believe that such a centre would put in place an effective mechanism for collecting and exchanging information on this phenomenon.

Iraq continues to find itself in a critically difficult situation of instability and insecurity because of the almost daily terrorist attacks mounted by terrorist groups, including the vanquished fleeing remnants loyal to the former Iraqi regime. Those terrorist attacks

largely impede the efforts of the Iraqi Government to rebuild in the wake of the devastation left by the former regime as a result of its hostile policies towards its own people and neighbouring countries.

The State of Kuwait continues to lend support to our brothers in Iraq with a view to rehabilitating and rebuilding their country. Our approach stems from our belief that stability in Iraq is ultimately in the interest of stability in this vital region of the world and would have positive implications for its security and progress. We are fully confident that the fraternal people of Iraq will eventually overcome this difficult period in their history and that they will persist in building democratic institutions, in adopting the text of their new constitution and in laying the ground for the forthcoming legislative elections.

In the same vein, we wish to stress Kuwait's commitment to the unity, sovereignty and political independence of Iraq. The State of Kuwait looks forward to establishing solid fraternal relations with the new Iraq on the basis of mutual respect, good-neighbourliness and adherence to bilateral agreements, to the relevant United Nations resolutions and to the resolutions of international legitimacy, as they constitute the fundamental pillars of the new and future relationship between the two brotherly countries.

Furthermore, we welcome the Iraqi Government's determination to try the leaders of the former regime for all the crimes against humanity that they have committed against the people of Iraq. The trials should also cover the crimes committed against the Kuwaiti people, including the invasion of the State of Kuwait and the killing of Kuwaiti prisoners and third-country nationals.

Kuwait reaffirms its full support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to attain all their legitimate political rights. Kuwait demands that Israel move forward in fulfilling all its commitments and obligations under the relevant United Nations resolutions, primarily Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003), in accordance with the principle of land for peace and the provisions of the Arab peace initiative, the bilateral accords it signed with the Palestinian Authority within the framework of the peace process, and the road map, with all its provisions and obligations. Israel must also end its policy of oppressing the Palestinian people, dismantle the separation wall and release all Palestinian detainees.

The State of Kuwait views the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as a first step to be followed by additional measures to be taken by Israel to end the occupation, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and in preparation for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on Palestinian national soil, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Kuwait hopes that the Israeli withdrawal will lead to the resumption of peace efforts in the region to ensure full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Arab Golan to the borderline of 4 June 1967 and its withdrawal from the rest of the Arab territory in southern Lebanon. Thereafter, a settlement should be reached through negotiations among all parties concerned to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region — a peace that would be enhanced by making the Middle East region, including the Gulf region, a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

In view of Kuwait's keen interest in the maintenance of security and stability in the Gulf region and given our close ties with the brotherly United Arab Emirates and with the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran, we support the position of the member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council regarding the three islands of the United Arab Emirates. It is our hope that the two countries will agree on a negotiation mechanism to resolve their dispute over the three islands, in accordance with the principles and norms of international law and good neighbourly relations.

It is our sincere hope that the resolutions on the promotion of sustainable development adopted at numerous international meetings and conferences convened by the United Nations and other organizations, as well as those goals in the High-level Plenary Meeting's outcome document, will lay the groundwork for a new partnership between the developed and the developing nations, thus contributing to the stability and the growth of economic relations among those States. We also hope that those resolutions will help create a balanced and fair international trading system in which each party assumes its responsibilities.

To create that kind of partnership, the economic structures of the developing countries need to be strengthened and the developed countries should fulfil

their pledges to provide financial and technical assistance and alleviate and cancel the debts of the poorest countries. They should also remove trade restrictions and tariffs on products made in poor countries and give those countries access to technology, enabling them to fully participate in the new economic system. All these measures would help put their peoples on the right track to development and prosperity.

In that context, the State of Kuwait is proud to have honoured all its international obligations. It will continue to support economic development programmes in developing countries through the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development. For the record, the Fund has so far extended $12 billion in development assistance to more than 100 countries in various regions of the world. Kuwait will also strive to ensure the stability of global oil markets, with a view to maintaining the pace of development and economic growth for all.

As we observe the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, Kuwait remains hopeful, confident and optimistic about the role of the United Nations and its capability to deal with international issues that pose a threat to world peace and security.

To that noble end, the international community must rally behind the United Nations and forge ahead at an even faster pace. We look forward to sincere and meaningful cooperation and partnership to tackle the current challenges. Furthermore, we must strive to create a future characterized by the values and ideals of freedom, justice and equality which, together, underpin security and stability across the world.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Bedjaoui, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

Mr. Bedjaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): At this crucial moment, when it is debating questions vital to the United Nations and all humanity, the General Assembly has unanimously decided to elect you, Mr. President, to preside over the deliberations of its sixtieth session. I therefore congratulate you very warmly and offer you my best wishes for success. I also congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, and thank the Secretary-General for his efforts for peace, development and agreement among nations.

Our world has been radically transformed since the end of the cold war — that sombre period that still has continuing effects. New threats have appeared, while other, older ones remain. New kinds of challenges loom, even as the international community is falling behind in finding appropriate responses to existing challenges, which are getting worse. New conflicts are erupting violently today, while the international community still struggles with the flashpoints that appeared following the Second World War, as well as those that arose out of the ensuing process of decolonization.

Humanitarian disasters, whether man-made or natural, and the problems of refugees, famine, the AIDS pandemic and malaria, exacerbated by persistent underdevelopment have contributed more than ever to stretch beyond strictly military issues our definition of collective security, which our Organization, since its birth, has been asked to promote. The mission to protect remains today an unattainable goal.

A vital threat seen daily throughout the world is the growing threat of international terrorism, which respects no borders and violates the most fundamental human rights. It is not enough to vigorously denounce the killing of innocent victims. To combat terrorism, we must oppose it with relentless determination. In that context, there is no alternative to resolute international cooperation that recognizes, above all, that an effective response to transnational terrorism is necessarily a collective effort.

Algeria believes it urgent to implement existing agreements on the fight against terrorism and to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism that can overcome the difficulties in reaching an agreed definition of terrorism while not providing pretexts for the oppression of peoples seeking to realize their legitimate rights. Active cooperation has been long awaited, but it is not sufficient.

Bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation must be expanded and improved as we strengthen international legal instruments, such as the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, adopted last April.

At the same time, given the justifiable revulsion terrorism provokes, we must guard against attributing such acts to any religion or civilization. On the contrary, we must emphasize that the aspiration to peace and the search for agreement and exchange

among peoples are values common to the various civilizations we represent. That leads us to express our complete rejection of terrorism and spurs our collective reaction against it.

We cannot hide our concern at growing intolerance and the echoes we sometimes hear of pseudo-theories and false analyses that show ever less restraint in directly blaming Islam, which, for the overwhelming majority of a billion believers, is a religion that calls for fraternity, solidarity and tolerance. To blame Islam — as some small but influential groups do — is to forget that before terrorism was recognized as an international phenomenon, it also struck, in particular, at Muslims who had rejected the perpetrators and denied their claims that they represented all Muslims.

I strongly reaffirm that those criminals have placed themselves outside Islam and have no claim to it. I say this on behalf of a country that has suffered a decade of terrorism and which has found precisely in its religion the endurance and the will to triumph over barbarism, staunch its wounds, renew its hope and take the path of reconciliation and brotherhood, which are at the very heart of the community of people and its leaders, as we approach the national referendum of 29 September.

Although the situation today confirms some of our earlier doubts and concerns, our only concern now is to see the people of Iraq — the heirs to an ancient civilization that is admired by the whole world — return to peace and stability through the recovery of its full and complete sovereignty over a territory whose integrity is best preserved by exorcising the divisive demons generated by the present circumstances.

The Arab world is today the site of promising developments for the development of democracy and economic prosperity for its people. It would be wrong to see in these developments merely a response to external pressure. First and foremost, it comes from peoples wishing to participate, finally and actively, in their future, and who are eager to make their specific contribution to the conduct of affairs in a world where nothing that happens should be alien to them.

This desire for reform brought the Arab heads of State together in Algiers, last March for a summit meeting, over which we were honoured to preside. Reaffirming that desire, the leaders made firm commitments and we have proceeded to implement them.

As diverse as the Arab countries may be in their political, economic and social realities, we still have the same aspiration, which is bearing us towards a future of peace and progress to be shared by all if possible. In other words, we are fully aware that no peace and no sustainable economic momentum can be built in the Middle East unless the Palestinian people recover their full and complete sovereignty in the occupied territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, capital of their independent State.

It is a positive thing that the risks of nuclear proliferation have received heightened international attention in the last few years. The seventh Conference to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty held last May should have provided us with a special occasion to develop and adopt appropriate measures to deal with the problem on a consensual basis. However, we must note that our expectation was not met, particularly with respect to the 13 measures on nuclear disarmament agreed to at the preceding Conference. Algeria, which has adopted and supported the Additional Protocol on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime, also fully supports total and complete disarmament, as well as the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction. But we cannot conceal our concern that an exception to the treaty that has been tolerated, even allowed, in a region as riven by conflict as the Middle East only further underscores the discriminatory approach that prevails with respect to non-proliferation.

The African landscape has been profoundly transformed since the formation of the African Union and the launching of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). So it is with new energy that Africa, having established its Peace and Security Council, has decided to tackle the conflicts that afflict it and to take up the resolute promotion of their final settlement. Anyone who looks at Africa objectively cannot ignore the endemic diseases, all of the visible and latent crises, the natural and man-made disasters, the famine and illiteracy. But today's Africa, we must note, has never had so many democratically elected regimes and so many economies undergoing promising reforms. Much still needs to be done, and the African countries are the first to recognize that.

Out of a sense of solidarity and also out of self-interest, developed countries should accompany Africa in its determination to make a radical change in its circumstances so as to allow the African continent to

become part of the world economy, gain prosperity and make its contribution to the prosperity of the world in general. This cannot be done unless we take specific actions that have been amply identified by NEPAD, by the Commission for Africa established by Tony Blair and by the report of the Secretary-General of our Organization.

As you know, the main points are to erase the debt and raise official development assistance (ODA) from the current $25 billion to $50 billion and then to $75 billion between now and 2010, to establish an international finance facility and to raise ODA from the developed countries to 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product by 2015.

It is also in Africa, near Algeria, that we still see one of the last remaining uncompleted processes of decolonization. I am referring to the conflict in the Western Sahara, where Morocco and the Polisario Front are adversaries. The United Nations has identified this territory as being non-autonomous, and it is a situation that is actionable under the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. There is a peace plan that has been approved unanimously by the Security Council, calling for a framework and modalities for a final settlement through a free consultation of the Saharawi people regarding their destiny.

My country believes that the Baker Plan is the only framework able to lead to a settlement of the conflict, which pits Moroccans against the Polisario. Algeria fully supports the efforts of the United Nations to this end. We are pleased in this respect to see Mr. Peter van Walsum appointed as Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and we assure him of our support in his mission, just as we do the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Western Sahara.

Resolving the conflict in the Western Sahara in keeping with norms of international legality and within the framework of the United Nations would have the positive effect of giving critical momentum to the building of the Greater Arab Maghreb, which Algeria has always called for.

We can only agree with the Secretary-General when he puts development at the centre of his concept of a new international economic order and gives it priority attention within the United Nations agenda. A few days ago, Member States evaluated progress made since the September 2000 adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and we must admit that the results are not that encouraging, the case of Africa being rather instructive. With regard to the implementation of the eight goals of the 2000 Declaration, we would say that some of them, such as poverty reduction, have been deferred to a dangerously remote future.

The requirement of adapting to new international realities makes reform an obligation for our Organization. Such reform must be thoroughgoing and balanced and serve and preserve the interests of as many as possible. We cannot just have specific amendments for the ambitions of a small number of Members, legitimate though those ambitions may be. The reforms to be undertaken must, above all, satisfy the majority and serve the collective interests and common aspirations of all.

The special attention given to the expansion of the Security Council is certainly justified, given the dominant role played by the Council in maintaining international peace and security, but we must not let this cause us to lose sight of the legitimate demands of Africa, nor of the need to maintain balance among the various bodies. Given the fact that most of the African countries were excluded from the Conference for the United Nations at San Francisco because they were colonies, it would be paradoxical, anachronistic and ineffective if developing countries were now invited to validate reform proposals that ignore their interests and concerns.

In this exercise that we are undertaking under the watchful eye of our peoples, let us work together and embrace a common vision that will ensure a future of peace and prosperity shared by the Member States that the United Nations has the duty to guarantee.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain.

Mr. Moratinos Cuyaubé (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Sixty years ago at San Francisco, the United Nations Charter was adopted. It was an event that set the path for the future of nations and peoples. It was an event at which intelligence was resolutely dedicated to peace and justice, and willpower was used for the common interest.

With the adoption of the outcome document by the High-level Plenary Meeting, a process of

paramount importance has been set in motion, one in which you, Sir, can count on the full support of the delegation of Spain. I wish to pay tribute to the sustained effort of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, and to reiterate to our Secretary-General my admiration for his personal and diplomatic skills.

There can be no doubt that the United Nations has taken a step forward as a result of the High-level Plenary Meeting. We have achieved progress in essential areas. Spain is satisfied with the outcome because we have stressed the importance of assisting victims of terrorism. The Alliance of Civilizations initiative has been well received. The summit recalled the need to continue assisting middle-income countries and supported the search for new sources of financing for implementation of the Action against Hunger and Poverty initiative.

I would like to mention here that an initiative on United Nations reform was unanimously adopted by the Spanish Parliament on 13 September 2005, urging the Government to achieve a number of objectives that are now reflected in the outcome document of the recent High-level Meeting. We recognized in that document that development, peace and security and human rights constitute the three basic interdependent and interrelated pillars of the United Nations system and are the foundation for our collective security and well-being. In our globalized world, we can solve international problems, and deal with new challenges and risks only through concerted action based on solidarity.

Among those collective actions, the fight against terrorism is an absolute priority for Spain. The General Assembly should adopt a global strategy that includes the goal of creating an international fund for victims. Spain has just signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, and in the Sixth Committee Spain is determined to promote the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism before the end of this sixtieth General Assembly.

The summit concluded that tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation amongst different cultures, civilizations and peoples are essential elements for the promotion of international peace and security. This is precisely the conviction that inspired the President of the Government of Spain to propose the Alliance of Civilizations initiative at the previous General Assembly. The Secretary-General's High-level Group to guide the initiative will hold its first meeting in my country this autumn. This initiative, co-sponsored by the President of the Government of Spain and the Prime Minister of Turkey, is more necessary today than ever. It is imperative to put an end to the negative drift in mutual perceptions that is being fomented and used by extremist groups.

It is also urgent to find innovative and additional sources of financing for development. For that reason, Spain, along with five other countries, is promoting the Action against Hunger and Poverty initiative with the aim of identifying innovative and additional sources of financing for development. In this regard, Spain actively participates in the cancellation of debt to benefit the heavily indebted poor countries and is preparing a plan to swap debt for public investment in key human development areas in Latin America.

Let me reiterate Spain's firm commitment to peacekeeping operations, which translates into substantial contributions of our armed and security forces wherever needed, especially in the Balkans, Haiti and Afghanistan. I would like to underline the high degree of commitment and professionalism shown by Spanish peacekeeping forces and recall with pride those who have sacrificed their lives for international peace and security. The creation of a Peacebuilding Commission is another outstanding achievement of this summit. Spain, as an important contributor to the United Nations budget and to its peacekeeping operations, is ready to participate actively in the work of this commission.

Since its inception this Organization has been determined to provide the international community with a binding legal framework for the protection and promotion of human rights. Spain shares this goal. We have strengthened our cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we have increased our contribution to its budget. We are also pleased with the establishment of a Human Rights Council and are fully prepared to contribute actively to the work of this new council. Over the past year, important legislative developments have occurred in my country, and we have taken significant steps to promote real equality among citizens in areas such as gender violence and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The Government has also tackled the situation of immigrant workers through the

implementation of a broad-ranging legalization process.

We firmly support the reform process aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations, which will ensure the concrete implementation of its resolutions. It is of little use to improve existing structures, if there is no enforcement of compliance with decisions. The United Nations must regain its credibility. We believe that the reform, especially that of the Security Council, must be the result of a broad agreement among all of us.

I agree with the Secretary-General that our greatest failure has to do with non-proliferation and disarmament. For Spain, nuclear proliferation represents a serious risk for international peace and security. We are concerned about the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and we support the preparation of an international arms trade treaty.

I cannot but mention here, once again this year, the question of Gibraltar and the need to put an end to this dispute through the implementation of the repeated mandates of the General Assembly that have urged Spain and the United Kingdom to continue their bilateral negotiations, with a view to reaching a definitive solution to the decolonization process, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Spain is willing to work in a constructive spirit; this spirit is reflected in the creation of a trilateral dialogue forum, the aim of which is to produce an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation for the benefit and prosperity of Gibraltar and the region as a whole.

Next month, Spain will host the fifteenth Ibero-American Summit in Salamanca. It will be a meeting that will constitute a turning point in the creation of a true Ibero-American forum, with the institutionalization of its secretariat and the manifestation of a stronger will to contribute to effective multilateralism.

Spain pays particular attention to its relations with its neighbours in the Maghreb region. Through an active and comprehensive policy, Spain wishes to reinforce its cooperation with those countries, firmly supporting political stability, respect for human rights and those reforms that are put in place to consolidate the rule of law and economic and social development.

In this regard, Spain firmly believes that the Western Sahara conflict, which has lasted for almost 30 years, requires priority attention. The international community must contribute to overcome the stalemate and offer, within the framework of the United Nations, a just and definitive political solution, in accordance with international law. To that end, Spain is developing an active diplomacy and believes that steps taken, such as the recent appointments by the Secretary-General of his Personal Envoy and of the Special Representative for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, will provide the opportunity to relaunch the process.

In the Middle East, the disengagement from Gaza, carried out with great skill and with great effectiveness by the Israeli Government, may constitute a powerful driving force in the peace process. It is only right to congratulate the Government of Israel for its decision. I also extend my congratulations to the Palestinian National Authority for having significantly contributed to the entire operation, so that it was completed in a peaceful manner. Now that the disengagement has been satisfactorily completed, the road map must again become the central framework for the peace process.

Moreover, the time has come to increase our aid to Africa and to support African countries in their efforts aimed at integration, peace and progress.

The summit outcome document is a good starting point to continue working towards achieving the agreements that still elude us. We cannot allow inaction, lack of ambition or shortsightedness to prevent the successful conclusion of the task ahead. Sixty years ago the signatories of the United Nations Charter translated into an agreement a thought that was as solid as it was simple: we can either walk together towards peace, or we will never find it. A year ago, before this Assembly, the President of the Spanish Government recalled that the history of humanity does not give us many reasons to be optimistic. Let us work with imagination and commitment to turn this Organization into an expression of common will, an Organization legitimized by its effectiveness and its universal character. Let us work so that some day we will feel proud as human beings. We are the United Nations, and the people of the world expect us to act as such in the face of the challenges and opportunities afforded to us in these times of change.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

Mrs. Calmy-Rey (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Eliasson, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to assure you of my country's full support during this sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

Reform will be a central theme at the Assembly's sixtieth session. Allow me to focus on four institutional reforms, by which Switzerland sets great store. They are, first of all, the creation of a Human Rights Council; secondly, reform of the Security Council; thirdly, the Peacebuilding Commission; and, fourthly, internal management of the United Nations.

The creation of a Human Rights Council is crucial. The Commission on Human Rights in its present form suffers from various defects. We deplore its weak capacity to respond to grave human rights violations. We also regret its overly selective character and the application of double standards, which undermine its authority.

Switzerland welcomes the decision made by the Member States at the summit to replace the Commission on Human Rights with a Human Rights Council. However, we regret that it has not been possible, even at this stage, to establish some of the working methods on which there was wide agreement.

For Switzerland, this Human Rights Council should be a principal organ of the United Nations or should at least be directly subordinate to the General Assembly. It should convene periodically, be based in Geneva and should work in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It should be of a size that guarantees both its legitimacy and the capacity to work effectively. Finally, to ensure real added value, it should incorporate those instruments that constitute the strength of the present Commission without reproducing its defects.

The profile and working methods of the Human Rights Council should be established promptly. We have given ourselves until the end of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly to do this, but the ideal solution would be to complete the work before the next session of the Commission on Human Rights, which starts next March.

We now need a clearer picture of the process which the President of the General Assembly intends to conduct. We assure him of our strong support in this task. Switzerland hopes that the future Human Rights Council can start its work soon, and it invites all States to strive towards this goal.

Switzerland has also been actively involved in the reform of the Security Council, an organ that embodies both the strengths and the weaknesses of the United Nations. No one can deny that the composition of the Security Council should better reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. Enlargement of the Security Council will make it more representative and will strengthen the authority of its decisions. However, enlargement of the Security Council, which has been the subject of intensive debate over the past few months, is only one aspect of the reform that needs to be made. It should not overshadow another indispensable part of the reform: the need to improve the Council's working methods.

For most countries, opportunities to sit on the Security Council are few and limited in time. A serious reform of the Council's working methods would have an immediate and beneficial effect for all Member States. New and more detailed rules should be adopted in a General Assembly resolution and then written into the Security Council's rules of procedure.

Reform of the Security Council's working methods must achieve several goals: it should increase the possibilities for participation by States that are not members of the Council; it should ensure greater accountability of the Council to all the Member States of the United Nations; and, finally, it should improve transparency and find new ways for the Council to hear other points of view.

Efficiency is a fourth criterion that needs to be taken into account. Improvements in the working methods of the Security Council must be geared towards strengthening its capacity to efficiently exercise its responsibilities for international peacekeeping and security.

In May Switzerland presented a series of specific recommendations that were well received by many Member States. I would like to focus on three specific proposals.

First, in accordance with the principle of the responsibility to protect, the right of veto must not be

exercised in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing or other grave and large-scale violations of international humanitarian law or human rights. I believe that that principle is sufficiently clear not to require further elaboration.

Secondly, the Security Council should refrain, as far as possible, from exercising legislative functions. The task of codifying and developing international law should remain the primary responsibility of the General Assembly, which includes all Member States. The Council is authorized by the United Nations Charter to take emergency measures to maintain international peace and security. However, that authorization cannot be interpreted as including the power to impose legislative obligations, that is, obligations that are general in scope, abstract and have no time limits.

Thirdly, on the subject of Security Council sanctions, the procedures for establishing and revising the lists of targeted individuals and entities must be improved. It is unacceptable that people who are subject to sanctions that affect their basic rights are denied all right of appeal. In particular, it is important to ensure the right to be heard, which is a fundamental human right.

Switzerland, together with other countries, intends to present a draft resolution on improving the working methods of the Security Council.

Another important institutional reform decided at the summit is the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission. Switzerland has contributed its ideas to that project over the past few months. It welcomes the creation of that body, which will address a key area of United Nations activities and fill a clear institutional gap.

Once a conflict has ended, the main players — institutions, States and civil society — must work together to rebuild the country. The principal mission of the Peacebuilding Commission will be to bring those players from the fields of peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and development together to define joint strategies for future action.

The Commission will include representatives of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as representatives of the principal financial donors and troop contributors. Switzerland believes that the main United Nations institutions concerned should also take part in the deliberations. For instance, it would be useful to include the Chairman of the United Nations Development Group, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It would also be useful to bring on board, as needed, experts from civil society, the academic world or the private sector.

Furthermore, in the composition of the Commission, we need to ensure gender parity.

Peacekeeping, humanitarian action and development are parallel activities and should not be rigidly divided into successive phases. In drafting its mandate, we should ensure that the Commission has the ability to advise all the institutional actors concerned at any step of the peace and reconstruction process.

We cannot speak of improving the efficiency of the Security Council without discussing the improvements that have to be made in the internal management of the United Nations. The Summit Outcome document sets out the most urgently needed measures. They must be implemented without delay.

In that context, the three following factors must be taken into account: first, the political competence and responsibility to decide the budget belong to the General Assembly; secondly, the Secretary-General's management authority must be extended; and, thirdly, the internal oversight bodies must be strengthened.

The scandals that have tarnished the image of the United Nations in recent months underscore the urgent need to strengthen the means as well as the financial and operational independence of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Furthermore, given the increasing complexity of their task, we must strengthen cooperation between the various oversight bodies, which are spread across the United Nations system. We invite the Member States to support the enlargement of the mandate of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, so that it is able to respond to requests for assistance from the specialized agencies.

Especially close to my heart is the importance of combating cases of abuse and sexual exploitation committed in the context of United Nations peace operations. Such abuses are a grave violation of human rights and of the values that the Organization espouses. They damage the credibility of the Organization and hinder the accomplishment of its missions on the

ground. Switzerland advocates zero tolerance on this question. We strongly support the measures that have recently been taken, in particular an increase in the number of resident investigators deployed on the ground under the authority of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

Last autumn, we embarked together on a major undertaking: adapting the multilateral system so that it can address the new problems and challenges of the twenty-first century, with a strengthened and more efficient United Nations at its centre. All reform requires a subtle mix of ambition, realism and patience. We have come part of the way. The basic itinerary was set at the summit. We must now pursue the path of reform, give shape to our early decisions, and resolve persisting differences. That has to be one of the main objectives of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, which has just begun.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Niger.

Mrs. Mindaoudou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I am very pleased, Mr. President, on behalf of the delegation of the Niger, to express our warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. In electing you, we recognize your outstanding qualities as a diplomat and as an active player on the ground — qualities that augur well for the success of the present session. Rest assured, Sir, that you will have the full support of my delegation. We wish you every success in accomplishing your task.

To your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, I wish to express our appreciation and our gratitude for the wisdom, skill and insight with which he guided the work of our previous session and prepared for the High-level Plenary Meeting.

To Secretary-General Kofi Annan, I wish to pay a well-deserved tribute for the decisive role he has played at the head of our Organization. We pledge our unswerving support for his efforts to reform the United Nations system and adapt it to the concerns of today.

Need we recall the historic nature of our session? It is taking place exactly 10 years after the Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the Programme of Action was adopted by the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. The Secretary-General, in his important report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (*A/59/2005*), made a comprehensive diagnosis of the multiform and interdependent threats and challenges facing the world and, at the same time, made interesting recommendations to deal with them. Equally historic is the outcome document (*resolution 60/1*) of the High-level Plenary Meeting, which we just adopted. It is a source of great hope in our arduous efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Among those threats and challenges, to which I shall refer again presently, are terrorism, the inequalities of the international economic and trade system, and violations of human rights.

Terrorism continues to rage throughout the world, seriously threatening international peace and security. The recent attacks in London and Sharm el-Sheikh attest eloquently to that fact. The fight against this scourge must therefore be strengthened and carried out over the long term, but within the framework of international law. In that regard, we believe it is crucial to accelerate the process of elaborating an international convention to fight terrorism. Such a convention should define the concept clearly to avoid ambiguity.

Moreover, the fight against terrorism cannot be effective and fruitful without appropriate international cooperation. It is because of such cooperation — which has enabled us to strengthen the capacities of our defence and security forces — that my country has recently had considerable success in combating this phenomenon.

Peace and security also require the adoption of effective measures against the proliferation of weapons in general. Here, I welcome the initiative of the Economic Community of West African States — which the Niger currently chairs — aimed at establishing a legally binding instrument: its moratorium on the manufacture, import and export of weapons. That approach has led us to regret the failure at the most recent review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Today, international peace and security are being sorely tested by a steadily rising number of conflicts, some of which seem to be endless quagmires because of their persistence and recurrence. In West Africa, although some hotbeds of tension are in the process of being defused — such as in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau — the subregion is still not completely

free of insecurity and instability. We hope for positive developments in Côte d'Ivoire that will permit a swift return to normalcy in that country, formerly a harbour of peace and prosperity.

In Western Sahara, the Niger reaffirms its support for the Secretary-General's efforts to bring about a just and lasting settlement of the conflict in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In Burundi, we welcome the positive outcome of the peace process culminating in the legislative and presidential elections.

Peace must not only be re-established and maintained; it must also be consolidated. In that regard, the Secretary-General's proposal concerning the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission is of capital importance, in that it will enable many countries emerging from conflict to break the vicious circle of violence and devastation.

Concerning the Middle East, my country wishes to reaffirm once again that settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict necessarily depends upon the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the creation of an independent, sovereign and viable State. In that regard, Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is a positive step that, we hope, will permit the resumption of negotiations within the framework of the road map.

With regard to Jammu and Kashmir, we remain convinced that the relevant United Nations resolutions must be implemented to enable the Kashmiri people to exercise their right to self-determination. That should further reduce the tensions between India and Pakistan. The Niger, a member of the contact group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on that issue, encourages the two parties to move forward in their talks aimed at a definitive settlement of this problem.

This year, as we assess the progress made in honouring the commitments made at the Millennium Summit, the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting, which we just adopted, once again emphasizes the interdependence of States and highlights the need for increased solidarity. To that end, solidarity and international cooperation must, more than ever before, go beyond professions of faith if they are to be more effective. In any event, solidarity must no longer be infinitely variable, as is unfortunately the case today.

The Niger, recently the victim of an acute food crisis, would like international solidarity to be rethought so that we can invest in the future by implementing lasting solutions that will ensure permanent food security for our people. Without a rethought solidarity, many African countries, including mine, may unfortunately never be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. That would require an increase in official development assistance, from both a qualitative and a quantitative perspective. In that regard, we welcome the decision of those developed countries that have elaborated a timetable enabling them to achieve the set objective of 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product by 2015. A rethought solidarity would also require the establishment of innovative financing sources that would not place an excessive burden on developing countries.

We welcome the recent decisions taken by partners, particularly the Group of Eight and the European Union. We urge the international community and the United Nations to further strengthen their cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa's Development and with new initiatives for Africa, including the Blair Commission's International Finance Facility, President Bush's Millennium Challenge Account and the Chirac-Lula initiative.

With regard to international trade, we hope that the multilateral negotiations under way will lead to mutually advantageous results by 2006, as planned. However, in the interest of mutual and shared development, there must be an end to all agricultural subsidies on exports. In that regard, the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference planned for December is a crucial event for us that, once again, should be attended with this rethought solidarity in mind, particularly with regard to the poorest countries.

Concerning institutional reform of the United Nations, my country wishes to pay tribute to the far-sightedness of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in identifying the stakes of such reform and in making his interesting and important recommendations.

The Niger is fully committed to the role played by Africa in the international arena. That collective commitment has led us to forge a common position on United Nations reform, which my country wholeheartedly supports. In fact, our continent, whose importance is more apparent every day, must pursue

with determination and in unity its fight for the democratization of international relations.

The United Nations is the only world body with the mandate of addressing issues of security, development and human rights. To be equal to that immense and delicate mission, it must be fair, representative and democratic. It must also base its actions on multilateralism and consultation, particularly within the General Assembly.

The long-awaited reform of the Security Council must be pursued in transparency so that a renewed United Nations can be more democratic and more representative of today's world.

The Economic and Social Council, for its part, must be the forum for coordinating and drafting strategies so that the excellent opportunities created in this increasingly globalized world will also be accessible to the poorest countries.

The establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission has filled a significant void, because it constitutes a formerly non-existent link between security and development.

We welcome the creation of the Human Rights Council, based on the principles of universality and non-exclusion. These are the prerequisites for strengthening and improving our shared House.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Juli Minoves-Triquell, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Culture and Cooperation of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English translation provided by the delegation*): At the beginning of the third millennium, faster means of travel that began in the nineteenth century with railroad technology are today hurtling us around the globe at even faster speeds. Dramatic changes are taking place at all levels and in all modes of communication. From the train, to the automobile and to the airplane, even in space travel, speed is erasing spatial barriers. The telegraph, the telephone, the Internet, cell phones, video conferencing: speed is altering the way we communicate with one another.

In this new age, immensely significant developments can take place as more quickly than the mind can follow them. But as the philosopher Paul Virillio warns us, with every new technology comes the potential for a new accident and with increasing speed comes the threat of ever more horrendous catastrophes. Natural disasters have become magnified not only by increases in population, but by the growing dangers of environmental pollution.

Sixty years after the founding of the United Nations, we live in a faster world, where we have to be able to react to events almost immediately. We have to ensure that even with the feeling of heightened risk that we live with at the beginning of the twenty-first century — whether this be due to natural phenomena, advances in technology, the threat of terrorism or the frittering away of resources — our will to act is not in any way diminished. The bar is set very high, but our capacity to act together as a whole can be just as great.

Another period of technological innovation also affected dramatic changes in the speed and mode of communication — the printing press. Let us reflect for a moment about the effects of those changes and what we might learn from them. The printing press fostered a rapid exchange of information that was readily available to large numbers of people and could not be censored or controlled, although some institutions tried very hard to enact such controls. Out of this explosion of information came the glory of a scientific revolution but also the sixteenth-century wars of religion and Europe's first world war, the Thirty Years War of the first half of the seventeenth century. The promise of eventual mastery over the natural world was coupled with violent attempts to dominate the minds and souls of man.

In many ways, our own information revolution has had a similar effect on developments. On the one hand, we have reason to hope that the problems facing the world can be solved by technology; on the other hand, technology has contributed to the rise of extremism and provided the means to unleash violence of hitherto unknown proportions.

The radical enlightenment, which first began in the Netherlands, a small country but one known for its tolerance and liberty of creative thought, offered new solutions to the turmoil and sectarian violence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It developed a mode of critique that could be separated from religious truth, and, for the first time in the history of the West, a fully modern ethical system. What forms might a radical twenty-first century enlightenment take? I would rather hope that we will see a new sense of

human values, a recognition that we are united not only by our presence in a shrinking world but as members of the human race.

We are fully aware that even as this explosion in technology seems to link all countries in the embrace of a globalized media culture, it feeds old parochialisms, nationalism and ethnic strife. The gap between rich and poor, the have and have-not countries, seems ever wider, even as our interconnectedness grows in trade and in labour. But with visions of first-world excess beamed into every corner of the globe, can anyone be surprised that anger towards the West increases? Poverty, discrimination, war, hunger and disease — this is the daily lot for a great part of humanity. We see the images every day. We cannot ignore nor can we fear these realities. We have to face them with real development policies coupled with good governance and a just system for trade and dialogue. The Millennium Development Goals are our collective responsibility.

The legacy of the Renaissance nation State remains a powerful concept. Our love for our respective countries and all that this represents to us is a defining aspect of our identities. So how is it possible to overcome the fundamental paradox of this Organization — to link the pride of our national statehood, which is the source of our material, cultural and ethnic differences, to the idea of unity, of being "united".

In part, the answer seems to lie in the potential for rebalancing the global economy, but it also requires a reawakening of those dulled sensibilities that separate rich from poor, the advantaged from the disadvantaged, the free from the oppressed. The Millennium Declaration was a necessary step forward, and the current tensions over reform should not distract this body from its ultimate mission.

Whether we are speeding towards challenges that will take the form of natural or man-made catastrophes, we can be assured that their effects will no longer be contained within national borders. We must prepare to respond to them with a strength and resolve that also knows no bounds.

Before, I spoke of a small country, the Netherlands, and of its history. Andorra is also a small country that believes in tolerance and respect for our fellow man. Our stable relations with our neighbours, Andorra's tradition as a safe haven during European wars and conflicts, our parliamentary tradition that stretches back to 1419 and our geopolitical realities, all make us believe in and defend the virtues and values of dialogue, pacifism and development, which are at one with those of the United Nations.

In twelve years of international life, my country has adopted some 130 international conventions and has stated its firm belief in international law, as in the creation of the International Criminal Court. We will continue in this task, reaffirming our commitment to multilateralism, and by sending to Parliament for ratification the conventions on terrorism and human rights. We also give our support to the creation of a Council of Human Rights, and we will follow closely the progress made on a new convention in the struggle against terrorism.

The United Nations represents a legacy from a period of conflict which culminated in the Second World War, the Cold War, and the nuclear stalemate that followed. While we recognize its imperfections, we must not forget to acknowledge the wisdom of its guiding principles: peace between all nations, universal human rights, and the development of states.

We live in a time when the power of a single nation is fast becoming an historical illusion. Let us work towards a new enlightenment, the unity of the United Nations. It is time to work together for the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The recently convened High-level Plenary Meeting at the level of heads of State or Government can rightly be referred to as the major historical event of the beginning of the new millennium. It is important that, at the summit, the international community not only reiterated previously undertaken commitments but also took new, concrete decisions for their practical implementation. Most importantly, world leaders clearly stated that there is no alternative to the United Nations as an international Organization that can coordinate efforts to address the challenges faced by humankind.

Through the common political will of world leaders, a unique opportunity has arisen to strengthen joint efforts towards peaceful and sustainable social

and economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); to progress towards the eradication of poverty and disease; to overcome humanitarian crises; and to provide a better world for present and future generations.

Further progress requires united, concerted and consistent action on the part of the international community as a whole. There is no doubt that the United Nations must play a key role in mobilizing and coordinating such efforts. We share the view that it is necessary to strengthen the Organization and its specialized agencies, including through the urgent reform of the Secretariat and of other United Nations bodies.

Tajikistan welcomes the outcome of the September summit and is prepared to meet all the commitments and implement all the decisions outlined in its outcome document. We view them as a pledge by the international community to devote the necessary attention to human development challenges and, to that end, to channel additional financial resources to countries in extreme need, such as Tajikistan.

The Millennium Development Goals must remain the focus of our efforts. There is no doubt that, at the national level, the pace of, and priorities in, the implementation of the MDGs must be adapted to the conditions prevailing in particular countries, each of which has its own way of doing things and its own particular characteristics.

Tajikistan aims to achieve maximum progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Despite the difficulties we face, we have made real progress towards attaining them. According to the World Bank, noticeable positive changes have occurred in the area of poverty reduction: in recent years the number of people living below the poverty line has decreased by 16 per cent.

It is clear that progress has been made in ensuring food security, which is among the key priorities in Tajikistan. The Government's objectives include the development of agriculture and the creation within it of a viable private sector, and, at a minimum, a threefold increase in the income of rural households.

We fully agree with the conclusions reached in the Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment report submitted to the Secretary-General by a team of experts led by Jeffrey Sachs, which state that Tajikistan has a unique opportunity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in the context of their major parameters, by 2015. Successful achievement of the envisaged targets will allow Tajikistan to become, in Central Asia, an example of an emerging democracy characterized by equality and prosperity.

Tajikistan is currently at a turning point in its development. The armed conflict was resolved within a short period of time, and the complex peacebuilding phase, which is being successfully implemented with United Nations support, is approaching its conclusion. Over the last five years, with the involvement of the United Nations Office in Tajikistan, the country has successfully travelled the difficult road of national reconciliation, enhancing its stability, establishing democratic institutions, promoting the rule of law and ensuring respect for human rights.

Stability and the implementation of first-generation reforms have brought about a speedy increase in gross domestic product, with an annual increase of 9.3 per cent over the past five years. The rehabilitation of the country's economy is progressing. At the same time, the Republic's authorities have a clear idea of the scale and complexity of the problems facing the country and are fully aware of their responsibilities in addressing social and economic problems, and they are undertaking every possible measure for their resolution.

Tajikistan is one the first countries in the world to have generated, with the assistance of the United Nations, an estimate of the overall costs and resources required for the implementation of the MDGs. The Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment identified the fundamental structural and institutional reforms needed in Tajikistan to create an enabling environment for achieving the MDGs; policy priorities in respective sectors; and financial schemes for funding the development of rural areas, the educational and health systems, the water supply and sanitation infrastructures, and the environment.

According to The Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment, Tajikistan will need about $13 billion over the next 10 years to achieve the required progress in the implementation of the MDGs.

However, the Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment is only the first concrete measure. Based on that document, a National Strategy for Development for 2006-2008 and a more detailed

Strategy for Poverty Reduction for 2006-2008 are currently being elaborated in Tajikistan. These measures, undertaken by the Government of Tajikistan, fully accord with the decisions of the summit on the elaboration of national strategies for development.

Tajikistan's social and economic development will depend largely on the international community's approach to addressing existing challenges, including poverty eradication; development financing; the creation of an equitable system of world trade; the alleviation of the consequences of natural disasters; and the resolution of demographic problems. That is why the summit's decisions on such a crucial issue as development financing are of pivotal importance for Tajikistan.

Allow me briefly to touch on some key issues.

I turn first to needs related to official assistance for development. In cooperation with United Nations experts, we assessed our needs in this area in a detailed and transparent manner. Currently, our financial requirements for sustainable development considerably exceed the available federal and external resources. Of the $930 million that international donors have committed to allocate to Tajikistan during the period 2003-2005, only 40 per cent has actually been provided. We call on the international community to double, at a minimum, existing aid for the implementation of the MDGs.

Reducing the burden of foreign debt is of special importance for us, since the funds released can be invested in development. Due to the efforts undertaken by the Government to reduce the burden of servicing foreign debt, some progress has been achieved in the restructuring of bilateral debts in recent years. However, in the near future, the debt burden will remain heavy. According to estimates, this year debt will equal more than 40 per cent of gross domestic product, and it will continue to pose a threat to the macro-economic stability of the country and to plans for development.

The economy and trade in Tajikistan depend to a large extent on favourable conditions in the world market. Tajikistan hopes for the successful completion of the Doha round of trade negotiations within the World Trade Organization, in order that it may fully realize its potential in the field of development and so that progress can be made towards an open and equitable system of world trade.

Lack of access to the sea and remoteness from world markets significantly increase transit transportation expenditures, make it harder for the country to participate in world trade and directly affect the poverty rate in the country. In that context, the promotion of regional cooperation, primarily with neighbouring countries, is a key factor for the achievement of the MDGs in Tajikistan.

Our region faces specific problems, given that the establishment of an environment conducive to developing trade relations and the promotion of economic relations as a whole depends, in many respects, on the success of the stabilization and peacebuilding processes in neighbouring Afghanistan. With respect to the country's post-conflict rehabilitation, it is clear that, at the regional level, active involvement by the States of Central Asia neighbouring Afghanistan in its development will be key to the success of the efforts undertaken there.

In this connection, Tajikistan believes that it is absolutely essential that Afghanistan share in the multifaceted process of regional cooperation. We expect our region's leading international partners to provide appropriate support for that process. Indeed, that issue could be considered by the new United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.

Although we rely on international assistance, the Government of Tajikistan is making increased efforts to utilize the country's own capacity to the fullest extent. Tajikistan's water resources offer enormous advantages in terms of the implementation of the MDGs. Unfortunately, less than 5 per cent of their potential is currently being exploited.

Rational and fair management of water resources will contribute directly to progress towards the MDGs by helping to address challenges related to, inter alia, food security, employment, sanitation, the reduction of disease and increased school attendance. Our common goal is to develop a qualitatively new pattern of sustainable water resource management and to address water economy challenges at the national, regional and international levels by bringing together international community support and national efforts, while ensuring that the countries themselves and even subregions facing water supply problems play the leading role.

We expect all countries and all of the specialized agencies of the United Nations to take an active part in events relating to the International Decade for Action

"Water for Life", the success of which will depend on joint activities being undertaken. That should make a common, tangible contribution to the future of humankind.

As a country that has lived through civil conflict, Tajikistan considers progress in the implementation of the MDGs to be of special significance. The successful social and economic development of the country is the key to preventing a recurrence of such conflict. Our experience teaches us that creating conditions that can prevent the resumption of conflict and strengthen the process of advancing social and economic development in countries that have lived through such conflict must be among the key goals of the international community. In this connection, we fully share the conviction that the United Nations must focus on overcoming and preventing conflict and on post-conflict rehabilitation and development. We hope that the new United Nations Peacebuilding Commission will expand the capacity of the international community to respond to the needs of post-conflict countries and allow a direct link to be made between security and development. The Economic and Social Council is called upon to play its role in that process.

Tajikistan, which suffered in its struggle for independence, has resolutely set out on the democratic road towards development, and will not turn back. The international community, first and foremost the United Nations, has made an enormous contribution in that regard, and for many years we have benefited from its generous assistance and selfless support.

We are convinced that the United Nations should remain the key body for regulating international relations in the new millennium. We are working on the assumption that the consolidating function of the United Nations should be enhanced. The reform of the Organization should be rational, and the renewed United Nations itself should be strong and capable of responding to world events in a swift and proper manner so that it can effectively counteract the many global challenges and threats of a new generation. Tajikistan will make its own contribution in that area with a view to strengthening the United Nations and enhancing its role in the modern world.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jorge Briz Abularach, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala.

Mr. Briz Abularach (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a founding Member of the United Nations, Guatemala would like to reaffirm, before the General Assembly, its faith in and commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, the sovereign equality of States and participatory, transparent and democratic multilateralism. The United Nations continues to be the best tool available to humanity in its endeavour to accomplish that goal.

The goals that the Charter signatories set for themselves six decades ago have lost none of their validity. Indeed, the attainment of those goals remains a major challenge for humanity. The goal of maintaining international peace and security presents new challenges. Its relationship with sustainable development and the fight against poverty serves as a paradigm in that regard. We are confronting new threats that make it harder to ensure good governance and undermine democracy, such as trafficking in persons, weapons and drugs, as well as terrorism. Small and vulnerable countries, such as mine, are particularly affected by those problems.

We have been trying together to cope with such new challenges for some time, but only recently have we been able to reflect on them and reach a number of agreements that we trust will enable us to reform the Organization with a view to address these challenges, as a whole, more efficiently and with renewed ambition.

We support the appeal made by Secretary-General at the beginning of the general debate for an "accountability pact" to ensure that the Secretariat and Governments are effectively held to account and monitored.

Guatemala will continue to participate actively in efforts to set up the Peacebuilding Commission. Our own national experience will enable us to contribute actively to those efforts.

We will also contribute to the effort to achieve the speedy conclusion of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism and to the implementation of an integral strategy aimed at the suppression of that scourge.

We attach equal importance to the creation of a standing Human Rights Council, the composition of which is to be agreed upon during this session, with a view to properly focusing, depoliticizing and making

more effective the discharge of our responsibility to ensure the full observance of human rights. We resolutely support the strengthening of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which should be provided with the resources necessary for it to carry out its work effectively. Similarly, we have no hesitation in supporting the responsibility to protect.

We consider it essential to make decisive progress in the areas of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation by means of initiatives such as that put forward by Norway, Australia, Chile, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Romania and South Africa, which Guatemala supports.

As regards the principal organs, we support the strengthening and revitalization of the General Assembly, whose task is to provide political guidance in connection with the work of the Organization. We must restore to the Economic and Social Council its leading role in the area of sustainable development, and continue to enhance its cooperation with the Security Council.

We urge the broadest support by Member States for the reform of the Security Council. It is essential that that reform effort be comprehensive and that it include a review of the Council's methods of work and of the procedures by which decisions are taken, the purpose being to strengthen the Council and to make it more legitimate, ensuring that it reflects present-day realities and represents developing countries. We are sympathetic to the aspirations of Brazil, Germany, India and Japan to become permanent members of the Council, as well as to the call for additional representation for Africa.

When addressing the Assembly one year ago, Oscar Berger Perdomo, the President of Guatemala, sought to express the feelings of our country at that crucial time in its history. I am pleased on this occasion to share with the Assembly some of the advances we have made since then.

Not only were the Peace Agreements integrated into the Government plan, but the framework law on those Agreements was enacted. Social dialogue has been pursued in all areas of Government action. A 43 per cent reduction in the strength of the army was achieved, and there was progress in modernizing and professionalizing it. In line with this, the Guatemalan army has increased its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations and is now in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Public expenditure is concentrated in the social area and in infrastructure, for which 60 per cent of the 2006 national budget is earmarked. A secretariat for food and nutritional security has been created, while a State policy in those matters has been drawn up, with a participatory and sustainable focus. Significant activities are being carried out at the national level and jointly with other Central American countries to combat common crime and transnational organized crime. A programme for economic and social reactivation continues to be implemented with enthusiasm, a cadastral law was recently enacted and a competition policy, adopted by consensus with the participation of civil society, will be presented next week.

The fight against poverty and social exclusion continues to occupy a central position in all the activities of the Government and is carried out in a manner that fully respects the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the country. Recently, we established a national policy for indigenous peoples, which was presented by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Ambassador for the Guatemalan Peace Agreements, Rigoberta Menchu.

Appropriate legal proceedings continue to be taken against persons guilty of acts of corruption. Full transparency continues to be ensured in the area of Government procurement.

Our commitment to the full observance of human rights is being maintained at the national level. Inter-agency activities are being carried out under the recently adopted national human rights programme. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has established an office in Guatemala, the functions of which are to provide advice to the Government, State entities and civil society in order to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights in our nation.

Nevertheless, the advances made are increasingly being compromised by an inordinate increase in the price of fossil fuels, which has an extremely negative effect on countries whose open economies, like that of Guatemala, are net importers of oil. Our oil bill is absorbing an increasing percentage of the foreign exchange generated by exports of goods and services. At the same time, we have had to cope with considerable increases in the cost of transportation and

of electricity, with their multiplier effect on productive sectors and the price of basic consumer goods. The effects of all this at the level of the economy as a whole and at the macroeconomic level threaten to slow down the expansion of our economy. For our part, we are doing all we can to conserve energy and develop alternatives to hydrocarbons. We appeal to the international community to cooperate with us in mitigating the impact of this situation.

Guatemala is taking actions to strengthen democracy at the national level by consolidating a regime that is democratic, participatory and inclusive. Our commitment to democracy in the world is unshakeable. That is why we are participating actively in forums that seek to promote and defend those rights, and we also support the Democracy Fund.

My country's foreign policy has as its main objectives achieving better inclusion of Guatemala in the world, strengthening multilateralism and regional integration. We have strengthened our ties with countries and groups of countries with which we have relations and are united by institutionalized mechanisms of cooperation; moreover, we have established new strategic associations with countries and groups of countries in South America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa.

Considerable advances have been made this year in regional integration. Progress has been made in the joint assessment carried out with the European Union to launch negotiations in 2006 for an association and free trade agreement between both regions.

The Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) with the United States, which includes the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic, offers great opportunities to our country for the generation of employment, increased investment and legal certainty. However, as we enter CAFTA-DR, the credit rating and export promotion agencies of the developed countries have assigned us a risk rating less favourable than what we consider it should be. Along with other consequences, that situation unfairly increases the cost of credit for us. Guatemala has one of the best debt-servicing records in Latin America, one of the world's best external debt indicators, well-established working relations with all multilateral agencies, sustained economic growth for more than 15 years, a stable currency, a single-digit rate of inflation and a high level of monetary reserves.

Strategically, Guatemala has advanced in the negotiation of trade agreements with Colombia, the Republic of China in Taiwan, the Russian Federation, Belize, MERCOSUR, CARICOM, the Andean Group, Chile, Canada, Egypt and Israel.

Another fundamental pillar of Guatemala's foreign policy is caring for the needs of Guatemalan migrants. The Government endeavours to solve their problems and to ensure that their human rights are respected, taking actions for that purpose at the national and international levels. We appeal to recipient nations, particularly the United States, to facilitate the regulation of the status of Guatemalan migrants in their countries. For those reasons, we continue to cooperate at the international level with all efforts aimed at resolving the problems that migrants face. We welcome the recognition contained in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) on the link between international migration and development.

Guatemala will continue to take the necessary steps to put an end to poverty in the country and to attain sustainable development. Prioritization of public expenditure at the national level is not sufficient for the magnitude of the actions we are setting out to accomplish. We consider it imperative to ensure the success of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO). By definition, the Doha Round should place development at the heart of its negotiations, and we trust that, when we meet in Hong Kong in December, we shall take decisions that by and large are consistent with the aspirations of developing countries. We need to have a level playing field in trade and agricultural commodities, and we need wider access to the markets of the most dynamic economies in the world for our goods and services, as well as to expand and diversify our product base.

We welcome the offer made by President Bush in this Hall to speed up the elimination of all tariffs and subsidies that distort free trade in the world. We urge donor countries, development agencies and the international financial system to increase their financial and technical cooperation with medium and low-income countries, with a moderate debt level, one of which is my country, Guatemala.

I wish to stress in particular our concern for the situation of the 23 million inhabitants of the Republic of China in Taiwan, whose aspirations for representation in international organizations remain

unfulfilled. Guatemala, which is committed to the maintenance of international peace and security as well as to the peaceful settlement of disputes, appeals to the countries bordering the Taiwan Strait to refrain from any threat or use of force and urges them to resolve their differences through dialogue.

We also express our hope that the difficult situation in the Middle East will have a satisfactory outcome, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1402 (2002). We are heartened in that regard by the efforts and progress made in the Middle East peace process, and particularly by the dialogue begun between the parties, the implementation of the road map, and the implementation of the disengagement plan.

One cannot avoid recalling here, during this anniversary of our Organization, the millions of persons who perished during the Second World War and the Holocaust as a result of the power of totalitarianism. Our presence here also recalls us to the struggle to recover democracy, freedom and the dignity of the human being.

Hope was born from the liberation of men, women, boys and girls from the concentration camps, the end of the war and the adoption of the Charter in San Francisco. We cannot disappoint those hopes or return to the past. The United Nations must deliver on its promises and continue to offer humanity an opportunity.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zarifou Ayeva, Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Togo.

Mr. Ayeva (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the people and Government of Togo and on my own behalf, to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I also assure you of the support and cooperation of the Togolese delegation, confident as I am that your experience and outstanding qualities will prove to be a major asset in ensuring that our work at this session will be commensurate with the great stakes and global challenges that we must meet together.

I also convey to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, our deep appreciation for the immense work he undertook with marvellous enthusiasm throughout his mandate. With commitment and insight, the qualities of a seasoned diplomat in service to his country, Gabon, and to Africa, he effectively guided the work of the preceding session, including the debates held in recent days on the Millennium Development Goals.

I also take this opportunity to pay vibrant tribute to the Secretary-General, our brother Kofi Annan, whose commitment to the United Nations and to the great causes and noble ideals it embodies has allowed us to register critical progress in improving the quality and effectiveness of the United Nations operations. I pledge him my country's full support in the ongoing mission we have entrusted to him, which he has carried out with competence, serenity, resolve and humanism.

The United Nations is now at a crossroads. The challenges that continue to face the world — in particular the ongoing conflicts that are ravaging many countries and regions around the world, the pandemics, floods and natural disasters, the terrible dangers that threaten the environment and the ecosystem, famine in various places, particularly in Africa, caused by drought and climate change, and the growing gulf between the wealthy countries and those afflicted by underdevelopment — require greater solidarity, the urgent reform of our Organization, and the adaptation of its bodies and operations to the new international context.

My country, Togo, will therefore firmly support the United Nations reform process, as outlined in the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, entitled "A more secure world: our shared responsibility" (A/59/565). Indeed, we absolutely must reaffirm certain fundamental principles and ideals that guided the founding fathers of the United Nations. We must devise strategies and working methods that are bolder and better adapted to the scope and seriousness of problems that cannot be effectively resolved except in the framework of this Organization, a symbol of solidarity and brotherhood among States and peoples. We need to pursue and step up our fight against poverty and hunger, the lack of education, gender inequality, child mortality, disease, environmental degradation, and devastating and lethal conflicts.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and people of Togo, to convey our deep gratitude and thanks to the community of States represented here for its many expressions of support and sympathy for our country after the unexpected

demise of President Gnassingbe Eyadema and in the context of Togo's difficulties in the wake of his death.

Very fortunately, Togo has emerged from that period of unrest and instability. Calm and serenity now reign and promise a new era of hope for our country. In fact, in spite of the tensions and violence that marked the electoral process, Togo has continued since then to make tangible progress in peacefully reorganizing its social and political life. The representatives of all political persuasions and civil society have together established a Government of national unity. Moreover, in accordance with our desire for openness and dialogue, we have launched consultations with the Togolese political class and civil society in order to reach a broad consensus and mobilization in managing the process of national reconciliation and in efforts to ensure the return and reintegration of refugees. The consultations also mark the onset of a political dialogue that will allow us, through joint effort, to agree on electoral reform, the reorganization of regulatory bodies and institutions, and the stages and schedule of legislative elections.

Safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms, enshrining the values and practices of democracy, and strengthening the rule of law and good governance are at the heart of the 22 commitments that my country approved on 14 April 2004 with the European Union. They are also at the very core of our action and of the demands and expectations of my fellow citizens. Immediately following the establishment of the Government, we therefore adopted bold measures and initiatives in various sectors.

A special independent national commission of inquiry was created to investigate the violence and vandalism committed during the electoral process. Similarly, Togolese authorities at all levels have fully cooperated with the United Nations fact-finding mission mandated to look into the violence and allegations of human rights violations committed between 5 February and 5 May 2005. The mission's conclusions and recommendations, which I believe will be useful and promising, will be considered in a spirit of open-mindedness and with a view to correcting potential areas of weakness so that we may never again experience acts of violence in future elections in Togo. In an effort to restore calm and reduce tension, all persons detained for their suspected involvement and responsibility in acts of violence, atrocities, pillaging of property and ransacking of buildings during the elections have been released. Also, with a view to strengthening citizens' confidence in the Republic's institutions, we have just launched a wide-ranging programme to reform the justice system.

Today, we reaffirm that democracy spurs the harmonious and sustainable socio-economic development of Togo. In that respect, effectiveness and transparency in the management of the affairs of the capital and respect for human rights are important responsibilities of the Government of Togo.

However, it is clear that the young democracy of Togo needs the international community's support in order to help democracy to take firm root and to strengthen peace and stability in West Africa. I take this opportunity to express once again the gratitude of the people of Togo to the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States for their assistance to Togo during such a crucial period.

Building a State where the rule of law prevails is a long-term effort; it is achieved gradually and requires consolidation at each step. That is true for all great democracies. I therefore call on all our development partners to support Togo in its steadfast and irreversible march towards a democratic, law-based State in which all Togolese can fully exercise their fundamental rights and can act, think and create in complete freedom.

In conclusion, I would like to underline once again the merits of international solidarity, in particular between the prosperous countries and the developing countries. In fact, we live in an increasingly interdependent world that faces multiple threats and challenges. Those threats spare no State, large or small, and make it imperative that we take coordinated and united action, in particular in those situations that jeopardize international peace and security.

Africa, in particular, remains a zone of conflicts and instability, and this exacerbates the feelings of helplessness and distress among our peoples. We welcome the engagement and the support of the international community, in particular in Côte d'Ivoire, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region.

We welcome encouraging signs in the peace process in Burundi. However, we call on the United Nations and the international community to remain vigilant and active in helping the brotherly people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose country

is moving towards stability and the completion of its electoral process.

Côte d'Ivoire must quickly return to the path of peace and harmony in order to pursue a leading role in the efforts for political and economic integration in West Africa.

But we believe that it would be wise to take timely action to address the causes of those conflicts, rather than intervene at a later date to deal with the often devastating consequences. We should therefore reflect together on how to address the root causes of those situations.

That leads me to make two suggestions for the Assembly to ponder.

First, regarding institutions, Africa must put in place democratic institutions of a new kind, founded on the value of dialogue and the ongoing search for compromise and consensus, closer to our tradition of discussion than to the imposition of the majority decision.

Second, we need to strengthen the management capabilities of States whose administration is still weak in order to improve the quality and the effectiveness of the public and administrative services, thus putting the State at the service of its citizens.

I hope that our Organization will strengthen its action to make national administrations more effective and more accessible for citizens. By doing so, the United Nations would further realize its vocation as an irreplaceable forum for dialogue and solidarity in the service of humanity, the well-being of peoples and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.